

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Marine Corps requested \$1.81 billion to pay for approximately 16,000 civilian employees in its fiscal year 2020 budget request. The Office of Management and Budget directs federal agencies to develop civilian personnel budgets by calculating workload requirements, the time needed to complete the work, and the number of FTEs needed. The Marine Corps uses a unique budget formulation process that relies on prior fiscal year budget data to calculate FTE estimates for future civilian personnel budget requests.

Senate Report 115-290, accompanying a bill for the DOD Appropriations Act, 2019, included a provision for GAO to review how the Marine Corps develops its civilian labor requirements for both FTEs and funding and examine the benefits and shortfalls of the Manage to Payroll process. This report (1) describes how the Marine Corps formulates its civilian personnel budget request and (2) assesses the Marine Corps' management of its civilian personnel budget and FTEs, including the benefits and weaknesses of the process.

GAO reviewed DOD civilian personnel budget policies, analyzed fiscal years 2013 through 2018 Marine Corps budget data that tracks spending and FTE allotment, and compared 2013 through 2018 budget execution data to budget request data.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Marine Corps 1) updates its budget policies to include guidance for commands to manage civilian personnel to FTEs and 2) identifies and reconciles differences between its internal data and data OUSD(C) uses to formulate the Marine Corps' annual budget request. DOD concurred with both recommendations.

View [GAO-20-148](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell, 202-512-3604 or [farrellb@gao.gov](mailto:farrellb@gao.gov)

## CIVILIAN PERSONNEL

### Additional Guidance and Consistent Data Reporting Could Help Improve the Marine Corps' Budget Management

#### What GAO Found

The Marine Corps develops its civilian personnel budget request using prior fiscal year budget execution data with adjustments based on input from sources such as the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense (Comptroller) [OUSD(C)] and the Department of the Navy. As part of the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps' budget request is added to the Navy's overall budget request, which is incorporated into the Department of Defense's (DOD) overall budget request.

The Marine Corps manages its civilian personnel based on dollar amounts—not full-time equivalent (FTE) workload like the other military services—through an approach called Manage to Payroll. Specifically, while the Marine Corps requests a certain number of FTEs each year as required by policy, the Marine Corps distributes the funds it receives to its commands by dollar amount and not based on the FTEs requested. This approach has benefits, such as providing flexibility to employ civilians based on current mission requirements. However, under this approach, for fiscal year 2019, internal Marine Corps' data show that four of its commands are either exceeding or not reaching their requested dollar amounts. Marine Corps policy does not provide guidance to its commands to manage FTEs to requested amounts. Without such updated guidance the Marine Corps risks overspending or underspending on its personnel requirements. In addition, internal Marine Corps civilian FTE data for fiscal years 2013 through 2018 is not consistent with data that OUSD(C) used to formulate DOD's overall civilian personnel budget request, as shown in the figure below.

**Internal Marine Corps' Civilian Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Data Compared with Department of Defense (DOD) Data Provided in Its Civilian Personnel Budget Request for the Marine Corps, Fiscal Years 2013 through 2018**

Execution year	Internal Marine Corps FTE data	DOD FTE data provided in its budget request	Difference between Marine Corps data and DOD budget request data	Percent difference between Marine Corps data and DOD budget request data
2018	15,348	15,527	(179)	1.15%
2017	15,591	17,817	(2,226)	12.49%
2016	15,237	15,471	(234)	1.51%
2015	16,184	16,809	(625)	3.72%
2014	16,912	17,290	(378)	2.18%
2013	16,925	16,616	309	1.86%

Source: GAO analysis of Marine Corps and DOD Budget Request data. | GAO-20-148

Note: Data is rounded to nearest whole FTE. Analysis uses Operations and Maintenance data and assumes Overseas Contingency Operations are not included in execution year data.

The Marine Corps has not identified or reconciled differences between its internal data compared to data submitted in the annual budget request. If information in the Marine Corps' budget request does not reflect internal Marine Corps data, then Congress and DOD leadership may not have sufficient and appropriate information to make informed planning decisions.